

Second, President Biden's border crisis presents a public health threat in the middle of a pandemic.

Recent reports have indicated that the administration plans to turn two Texas facilities, where migrant family units are being held, into rapid processing centers. The plan is to hold the family units for 3 days or less.

It is unclear if all of these migrants are being tested for COVID-19, when they are being tested, how they are being tested, and how they are being handled if they test positively.

Recent media reports also indicate that 100 undocumented immigrants who were released by the Department of Homeland Security into the United States later tested positive for the virus. In these times, as we are all concerned about the pandemic, it can't be acceptable.

Finally, President Biden's border crisis has created a situation that is overwhelming the men and women who work to protect our borders. It is straining the resources of agencies that must cope with the results of this administration's misguided immigration policies.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Federal Government and any Presidential administration, Republican or Democrat, is to enforce our immigration laws in ways that ensure the sovereignty of our borders, protects the American people, and, lastly, discourages illegal immigration. It is clear that this administration has failed to live up to this responsibility.

I hope that President Biden changes course and begins to work with Congress in a bipartisan way to secure our borders and, at the same time, reform our laws in ways that discourage this violation of our immigration laws by people just willy-nilly crossing the border, even being invited here. If they instead continue on their present course, this will be just the first of many border surges to come over the next 4 years.

What we need is to keep our doors open, as we have done for decades with legal immigrants, and do everything we can to discourage people from coming here in violation of our laws.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Ohio.

JOBS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to talk about workforce training, a critical issue always but particularly now as we get to the point where we are coming out of the COVID-19 crisis, the economy is picking up, and we need more workers in this country.

It is a significant issue to be able to help individuals to be able to achieve their God-given potential in life, but also it is really important to our economy because workforce is one of the big challenges we have. So to be able to get good-paying benefits for those workers, it is important but also to help our economy fully recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has been over a year now since the pandemic changed all of our lives. In the early weeks and months of that crisis, it looked like things were going to continue to be really tough. I stayed in touch with business owners and workers across my home State of Ohio to hear how they were handling the closures, the layoffs, the other painful side effects of the crisis in those early months. Finally, things are getting better, and we are beginning to see more reopenings.

In Ohio, we just learned that people are going to be able to get vaccinations if they are 40 years old or older versus 60 years old and older as of the end of the week. And within another 10 days, everybody 16 years and up will be able to get a vaccine. And we have opened up some wonderful mass vaccination centers. I volunteered at one on Saturday. I spent 5 hours directing people and heard a lot of emotional stories about people really excited about getting back to their families—grandparents being able to see their grandkids for the first time in a year and the opposite, children being able to visit their parents or grandparents for the first time since the COVID-19 crisis hit, and people excited about getting back to work and back to school. So we are going to be able to see this because of Operation Warp Speed and the heroic efforts of our medical researchers and begin to help move our economy forward.

In fact, we just found out that the economy added a healthy 379,000 jobs in February. That was encouraging. And more and more businesses, again, are reopening and replacing the signs that said "Closed Because of COVID" with signs that now say "Help Wanted."

I was at a hearing today, and the representative from the National Association of Manufacturers told us that there are over 500,000 manufacturing jobs that are being offered right now. In other words, there is a shortage of manufacturing skills right now. So that is a good thing in the sense that that means there will be opportunity, but we have to have the skills to be able to fill those jobs.

Perhaps most promising, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, called CBO—it is a group around here that gives us advice on the economy—said that even without the most recent spending package, the \$1.9 trillion package, that the economy is going to recover to where it was prepandemic by midyear. So by June 30, they think the economy will be back to where it was prepandemic. And we had a good economy then. In February, a year ago, we

had the 19th straight month of wage growth of 3 percent or more. We had 3.5 percent unemployment, a 50-year low. We had historically low unemployment for Blacks, Hispanics. We had the lowest poverty rate we had in 60 years. Things are going well, not just for the economy but bringing people out of the sidelines and in to work. But, obviously, the pandemic hit hard. And, now, as the economy begins to recover again, we have to be sure that people have the skills they need to take advantage of a growing economy.

The pro-growth policies that we have had along the way, including the tax cuts, tax reform, regulatory relief, had helped to make sure that economy was not just strong but also inclusive. So we have to keep that up as well.

But just as the biggest challenge pre-COVID, when we had a strong economy, was finding workers with needed skills, we are back there again. So if we want to get back to the kind of economy we all want, the workforce challenge has to be addressed.

In fact, again, I think it will be an even bigger challenge now because during COVID-19, there has been a dislocation in the economy. Some jobs have been lost, and people have to find new jobs and develop skills. Some are going to have to leave the hospitality industry, for instance, and they might want to go into the tech sector or go into the manufacturing sector or the healthcare sector. So that ability to shift jobs and develop skills is more important than ever.

I am hearing it from employers all over Ohio; that as unemployment continues to fall, there are thousands of job openings for positions like welders and machinists in our manufacturing plants. I mentioned the national figure of 500,000 jobs are available right now, so we are certainly seeing that in Ohio in our factories, medical technicians in hospitals, a lot of interest in techs and in people who are willing to work in healthcare to help others, computer programmers, coders. Almost every sector of the economy is looking for people who have coding skills. So these are the kinds of jobs that economists call the midlevel skills; you know, they need more than a high school degree, for sure, but don't need a college degree. And they actually are jobs that pay quite well with good benefits. So these are the kinds of jobs that we need to be sure that we are providing out there.

The supply of skilled workers in that category, students pursuing post-high school certificates in one of these skilled areas, falls way short. They call it the skills gap. And it is holding back our economy from reaching its potential, just as it is holding back individuals from achieving their potential.

There was one study from 2019 that found that the skills gap could cause us to miss out on nearly \$1.2 trillion of economic output over the next, at that point, 10 years. So, unfortunately, that skills gap hasn't been closed. In fact,

again, I think it is more important than ever that we address it.

The best option, I think, is to tackle it head-on by getting more people enrolled in these programs that can provide the skills training and equip them with the specialized skills that they need.

When people hear the words “skills training,” their first thought is often of career and technical education, CTE. There are some great CTE programs around the country. Some in my generation called it vocational education, but this is not your father’s Oldsmobile. This is not the same old vocational education; this is high-tech stuff. It is really exciting what is going on. These programs are run by middle schools and by high schools that teach students an incredible variety of skills: health sciences, business management, culinary arts, manufacturing skills. By the way, they are incredibly popular. The good programs are really oversubscribed.

One data point that I found interesting said that 92 percent of high school students are taking at least some kind of skills training course from the CTE programs. That doesn’t mean 92 percent are enrolled full time in CTE but taking at least some of those courses.

I have visited those schools all over Ohio. Again, they are exciting. They are specialized high schools that offer students a more specialized path than the traditional path that many students are encouraged to take, which would be to try to get a 4-year college degree.

By the way, again, this path, this specialized path, where you get these skills, leads to no student debt—assuming you could find a way to pay for the skills training, which we will talk about in a second—and a good job with good pay and good benefits, as opposed to many people who go to college and end up having a lot of debt and not having a degree that enables them to get the kind of job that they want. So it is a great option to do CTE and to get the skills training.

I am cofounder and cochair of what we call the Senate CTE Caucus, Career and Technical Education Caucus, with my colleague Senator TIM Kaine of Virginia. And we have worked to strengthen CTE programs, made them more accessible, made them more affordable, provided more Federal help for them. We have gone now from 2 to more than 29 Senators in our CTE Caucus. Our goal is to increase awareness of these CTE programs and the skills training they provide and get students interested in that kind of career training, provide the resources and opportunities that will then provide them what they need for good jobs with good pay.

We have also worked together on bipartisan legislation to make sure that the Federal Government is a better partner to States and local communities as they work to ensure these young people have the skills to find good jobs.

But CTE at the high school level alone isn’t going to solve our work-

force needs. Most industry-recognized certificates require more than the CTE training. They require a higher level of training. And CTE programs, as outstanding as they can be, are usually inaccessible to Americans who are no longer of high school age but would stand to benefit greatly from these skills programs. So people who are out of high school, adults, to get that more advanced certificate or to help older learners, the best option is to instead attend a certificate-granting technical workforce training program, the kind offered by your community college or your technical school.

These programs are outstanding. At Ohio technical schools, like the Eastland-Fairfield Career Center, the Vantage Community College, the Delaware Area Career Center, Stark State, and others, I have spoken to students in technical programs who tell me how excited they are to put these skills to work. Unfortunately, individuals potentially interested in these programs often cannot afford to make the investment in that education without some financial assistance.

I talked to Dr. Para Jones today. She is with Stark State in Summit County, Akron, OH. She told me an interesting story. She said that they have a real need in that area of Ohio, and, frankly, around the country, for truckdrivers. So for people to have the certificate, which is called a CDL—commercial truckdrivers license—they had openings in their courses, but it was \$5,000. It cost \$5,000 to get a CDL. And even though these students would be making that \$5,000 and more in the coming years because truck driving is going to be quite a good career for them—50-, 60-, 70,000 bucks a year, plus benefits, depending on how much they are willing to drive—the 5,000 bucks was just too much of a burden, too high a hurdle. So her view is: You guys have to help us to be able to help students get into the programs they want to get into.

I remember talking to a welder at a career and technical high school program. It was a woman, 1 of 2 women in a class of 12 people—10 guys, 2 women. She was doing some pretty sophisticated welding, but she said she wanted to take it to the next level; she wanted to be an underwater welder, which pays a lot. We are talking over a hundred thousand bucks a year, easily; yet she couldn’t get the skills at the high school level.

And when she was offered a Pell grant to go to college, she decided to take that instead, even though she wanted to be a welder. The government couldn’t help her go to welding school. And this welding school was expensive. It makes the \$5,000 for getting the CDL look like nothing. So it was tens of thousands of dollars to get this advanced certificate.

But she was offered the Pell grant to go to college, so she was going to college, even though she would rather be a welder. By the way, these welders are highly sought after by the energy industry and others.

So it is one of those examples where, if we could direct some of these Federal resources, not taking it away from colleges or universities but into our training programs, it would make so much sense, particularly for low-income students. And that is how I get to the Pell grants.

So Senator Kaine and I have introduced legislation that is called the Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students Act, or the JOBS Act. So we came up with an acronym so we could end up with the JOBS Act.

It makes all the sense in the world. It says that instead of getting a Pell grant that can only be used for going to a college or university, you should be able to get a Pell grant to get one of these shorter-term, industry-recognized certificates. They have to be high-quality, industry recognized. I think it would be much better for the students and certainly much better for the economy. Those are the middle skills that we need so desperately. Yet we are not supporting those students.

By the way, of those students who end up going to college with a Pell grant, they say that fewer than half end up getting a college degree in the end. Why? Well, the Pell doesn’t pay for your full expenses. There are very few colleges in Ohio where you can use a Pell and get through without having significant additional expenses on top of that.

It is tough, and a lot of people drop out to be able to go back to work, as opposed to these career and training programs where, No. 1, you are looking down the tunnel and you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. You have got 10 weeks in this training program. You can get there. And you see at the end of that—to mix my metaphors here, you see the rainbow at the end of that, which is a job, a great job, with good benefits. Plus, the \$6,400 from the Pell Program pays for it. For the most part, these programs are fully paid for by the Pell grant. So it is a really good idea.

And the JOBS Act is something Senator TIM Kaine and I have introduced before and we are introducing again this week. We want these low-income students to be able to get what they need to be able to get the good jobs, and we want our economy to be able to get those positions filled so that we can continue to grow our economy as a country.

By the way, it doesn’t mean these students aren’t going to go on to a college or university. I was in a CTE program several years ago talking to some students, one of whom was going to a local manufacturer who was a supplier to GE Aviation, which makes aircraft engines. He ended up going—50,000 bucks a year at the time, good benefits—to this manufacturer. He was learning welding and other skills.

Well, that company ended up paying for his college later, which I later

found out, which is not atypical. So it is a good example of where it doesn't mean you are not going to go to college. Some people will want to, and some people won't. This young man wanted to get an engineering degree, and the company was happy to help him do that to be able to come back to that company and to provide those skills.

So whether it is learning how to conduct HVAC installation, how to operate factory machinery, how to program computers, these programs teach students practical, transferrable skills to be able to keep our economy moving.

Increasing access to the skills training through the JOBS Act can also serve to lend a helping hand for those who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19. As I said earlier, many jobs have come back and are continuing to come back as we reopen our economy, but we are still down about nine, nine and a half million jobs from before the pandemic.

Some are at businesses that are now closed or in industries that have struggled and may be fundamentally changed as a result of the pandemic. In other words, some of these jobs won't come back, so people need to re-up their skills training. Folks who had those jobs, giving them the option to invest in a new skill set through technical education funded by a Pell grant is a ray of hope, a chance for them to get back on their feet, to find new, exciting, good-paying jobs.

I am pleased to say the JOBS Act has been endorsed by the National Skills Coalition, the Association for Career and Technical Education, the Association of Community College Trustees—in fact, last year, it was their No. 1 priority, among the community colleges—the American Association of Community Colleges, and other groups.

The reason the JOBS Act has this kind of strong support is it is the best proposal out there that will help fill the skills gap we have right now. It will cover programs that, at a minimum, require 150 hours and 8 weeks to complete. Alternative proposals severely limit the programs by requiring them to have too many hours, 320 hours. Ohio community colleges have told me none of their short-term training programs would qualify under that higher number of hour requirement.

Programs like welding, precision machining, and electrical trades—we need the JOBS Act now. As we work to get our economy back up to speed, passing the JOBS Act is a top priority for Senator Kaine, for myself, and for other Members on both sides of the aisle.

Let's be sure that we work together to get this legislations across the finish line. It just makes too much sense. It is going to help tens of thousands of people have better opportunities. It is going to help our economy fill the critical jobs it needs to recover.

We need to seize this opportunity, seize it now, get this economy back on track, and ensure Ohioans and all

Americans have this opportunity to develop the skills to grow in the career of their choice and fulfill their potential in life.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's Rules of Procedure be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

RULE 1. CONVENING OF MEETINGS

1.1. The regular meeting day of the Select Committee on Intelligence for the transaction of Committee business shall be every Tuesday of each month that the Senate is in session, unless otherwise directed by the Chairman.

1.2. The Chairman shall have authority, upon notice, to call such additional meetings of the Committee as the Chairman may deem necessary and may delegate such authority to any other member of the Committee.

1.3. A special meeting of the Committee may be called at any time upon the written request of five or more members of the Committee filed with the Clerk of the Committee.

1.4. In the case of any meeting of the Committee, other than a regularly scheduled meeting, the Clerk of the Committee shall notify every member of the Committee of the time and place of the meeting and shall give reasonable notice which, except in extraordinary circumstances, shall be at least 24 hours in advance of any meeting held in Washington, D.C. and at least 48 hours in the case of any meeting held outside Washington, D.C.

1.5. If five members of the Committee have made a request in writing to the Chairman to call a meeting of the Committee, and the Chairman fails to call such a meeting within seven calendar days thereafter, including the day on which the written notice is submitted, these members may call a meeting by filing a written notice with the Clerk of the Committee who shall promptly notify each member of the Committee in writing of the date and time of the meeting.

RULE 2. MEETING PROCEDURES

2.1. Meetings of the Committee shall be open to the public except as provided in paragraph 5(b) of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

2.2. It shall be the duty of the Staff Director to keep or cause to be kept a record of all Committee proceedings.

2.3. The Chairman of the Committee, or if the Chairman is not present the Vice Chairman, shall preside over all meetings of the Committee. In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman at any meeting, the ranking majority member, or if no majority member is present, the ranking minority member present, shall preside.

2.4. Except as otherwise provided in these Rules, decisions of the Committee shall be by a majority vote of the members present and voting. A quorum for the transaction of Committee business, including the conduct of executive sessions, shall consist of no less than one third of the Committee members, except that for the purpose of hearing witnesses, taking sworn testimony, and receiving evidence under oath, a quorum may consist of one Senator.

2.5. A vote by any member of the Committee with respect to any measure or matter being considered by the Committee may be cast by proxy if the proxy authorization (1) is in writing; (2) designates the member of the Committee who is to exercise the proxy; (3) is limited to a specific measure or matter and any amendments pertaining thereto; and (4) is signed by the member wishing to cast a vote by proxy, either by handwritten signature or autopen. Proxies shall not be considered for the establishment of a quorum.

2.6. Whenever the Committee by roll call vote reports any measure or matter, the report of the Committee upon such measure or matter shall include a tabulation of the votes cast in favor of and the votes cast in opposition to such measure or matter by each member of the Committee.

RULE 3. SUBCOMMITTEES

Creation of subcommittees shall be by majority vote of the Committee. Subcommittees shall deal with such legislation and oversight of programs and policies as the Committee may direct. The subcommittees shall be governed by the Rules of the Committee and by such other rules they may adopt which are consistent with the Rules of the Committee. Each subcommittee created shall have a chairman and a vice chairman who are selected by the Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively.

RULE 4. REPORTING OF MEASURES OR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. No measures or recommendations shall be reported, favorably or unfavorably, from the Committee unless a majority of the Committee is actually present and a majority concur.

4.2. In any case in which the Committee is unable to reach a unanimous decision, separate views or reports may be presented by any member or members of the Committee.

4.3. A member of the Committee who gives notice of intention to file supplemental, minority, or additional views at the time of final Committee approval of a measure or matter, shall be entitled to not less than three weekdays in which to file such views, in writing with the Clerk of the Committee. Such views shall then be included in the Committee report and printed in the same volume, as a part thereof, and their inclusion shall be noted on the cover of the report.

4.4. Routine, non-legislative actions required of the Committee may be taken in accordance with procedures that have been approved by the Committee pursuant to these Committee Rules.

RULE 5. NOMINATIONS

5.1. Unless otherwise ordered by a joint determination made by the Chairman and Vice Chairman, nominations referred to the Committee shall be held for at least 14 calendar days before being voted on by the Committee.

5.2. Each member of the Committee shall be promptly furnished a copy of all nominations referred to the Committee.